7: Furnivall G-4, 5 (no date) 1948 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

throughout the tropics recognize the *need* for well-educated natives in all lines of life; but they tend to overlook the fact that there is a very small *demand* for them.

7. Education and Progress

It is in the sphere of vocational and technical instruction, bearing directly on economic progress, that one would expect to find the need for education most intimately connected with demand. Throughout the tropics agriculture is the chief, and almost the sole, occupation of the people, and it is conducted on traditional lines without the help of modern science. There should, then, be great scope for improving agricultural methods by instruction. That appeared obvious to Curzon and, in his project of giving a practical bias to education, he assigned the first place to agriculture. In other dependencies the same plausible argument has seemed convincing. Yet in India, Burma, Java and the Philippines attempts to teach the people better cultivation have proved unsuccessful. General experience shows that the courses fail to attract farmers and that the students look for posts under Government or on western enterprise, or else seek non-agricultural employment in the towns. In Malaya, when an agricultural school was opened in 1931, 'there had long been a serious need for it'. There was a serious need but a very small demand. 'A disappointingly high percentage do not intend to manage their own land, but want positions under Government or on estates. Here the experience tallies with that of agricultural schools in Java and the Philippines. The agricultural department is now pretty well staffed, so that the number of vacancies is declining.' The school helped the plantations by turning out cheap overseers, but even these were mostly Chinese, whom the employers preferred to Malays. Although the intention was to promote Malay welfare, the result was chiefly to profit western enterprise.[1] Much the same thing has happened in Africa. In the Transkei agricultural training has been provided since 1904, and there have been special schools since 1914. The men found employment as demonstrators and not as farmers, and in the former capacity their services were in demand so far off as the Belgian Congo. 'There is some fear however that it may not be possible to keep up these schools; the demand for agricultural demonstrators is, for various reasons, already slackening, and shows signs of decreasing still further.'[2]

[1] Mills, pp. 355–6.

[2] *African Survey*, p. 1222.

7: Furnivall G-4, 5 (no date) 1948 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

814
463

It is significant that the provision of technical instruction has not been quite so disappointing in forms of production organized on western lines and mainly under western management. Even in this branch of economic life, however, the progress has been unsatisfactory. In most tropical dependencies western enterprise does not extend far beyond primary production and offers little scope for men with technical qualifications. In the Tropical Far East it has been built up on a basis of Eurasian, Chinese or Indian subordinates, thereby obstructing the employment of natives by a barrier which they cannot easily surmount. Even the trade-crafts are largely in foreign hands; the natives encounter similar difficulties in gaining an entrance, and sometimes meet with organized opposition, as when the Chinese master carpenters in Malaya declined to employ trained Malays.[1] In European concerns the higher posts have hitherto been reserved for Europeans, so that natives had no prospect of advancement. Moreover, where technical instruction has been provided, it has often, as for some years in Java, been debarred to natives because their 'academic' curriculum was not sufficiently advanced for them to profit by it. There is a popular belief that 'natives' prefer clerical employment as an easier, softer life, but this has frequently been disproved.[2] In most dependencies the failure of earlier attempts to encourage technical instruction has led to the appointment of committees of enquiry, and their reports have shown that there was little demand for men with technical qualifications. Even in Malaya, where the vast scale of western enterprise would seem especially propitious to the growth of technical instruction, a committee, largely composed of business men, reported in 1926 that 'the number of openings for technically trained men was limited, since the principal need of the country was unskilled manual labour, which was supplied by Chinese and Indian immigrants'.[3] So recently as 1938 a Commission on Higher Education in Malaya reported that the prospects of employment did not justify the establishment of an engineering school at Raffles College, and that training for the limited number of civil engineering posts could be given elsewhere.[4]

The slow progress of technical training in subjects bearing directly on material production is the more striking by its contrast with the

[1] Mills, p. 355.
[2] See e.g. Dr Van Mook, *J. Roy. African Society*, Oct. 1943, p. 180. Mills, p. 353.
[4] *Overseas Education*, 1939–40, April, p. 146.

7: Furnivall G-4,5 (no date) 1948 ALI Southeast Asia ALI

progress achieved in pedagogy. Ordinarily one finds that most of those receiving vocational instruction are being trained as teachers. Often, as at least formerly in Malaya, the pay and prospects of teachers are inferior to those of a clerk,[1] and the teaching profession is the last refuge of the semi-educated unemployed. Why, then, do so many seek to be trained as teachers? One reason is obvious. The demand for men in western enterprise and in the various specialist departments of Government service is soon met. But there is a general demand for lucrative employment, and consequently for schools to qualify men for employment, and therefore an almost unlimited demand for teachers. The Government can encourage the demand for trained teachers by imposing appropriate conditions on the grant of funds to schools. In agriculture and other special lines it is obviously waste of money to train men in excess of the demand, but there is little danger of an unemployable surplus of trained teachers, because in the teaching profession the Government fixes the demand that it supplies. Not until every school receiving grants from Government is fully staffed with trained teachers can the supply be in excess of the demand.

Whether the money spent on training-schools is well spent is another question. It seems plausible to argue that men will teach more efficiently if instructed in modern principles of teaching. But, in this matter as in others, the concept of efficiency is valid only in relation to the end proposed. Modern teaching methods have evolved out of educational experience in the homogeneous society of the West, where the school and the environment co-operate and teach the children at the same time how to live and how to make a living. But in the plural society of the tropics the children have a choice between attending schools, western or vernacular, where they may learn how to make a living, and native schools that still adhere to the tradition of teaching children how to live. Where children seek education in order 'to realize its manifold advantages as soon and as cheaply as possible',[2] a trained teacher should be better able to help them to qualify for 'a decent job' in the shortest time at the least possible expense. Within these narrow limits the certificated teacher should be more 'efficient'. But, in inculcating a higher, or at least different, point of view, he is no more likely to succeed than the many generations of devoted missionaries and educational enthusiasts in the past;

[1] Mills, p. 335.
[2] *RPI* (India), 1897–1902, p. 459.

7: Furnivall G-4, 5 (no date) 1948 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

and the man who acquires a teaching certificate merely as a condition of employment, or as a qualification for higher pay, is unlikely to recommend a different attitude to those he teaches. Moreover, in vernacular schools the great mass of the children do not remain long enough to acquire permanent literacy or even to get far beyond the alphabet. Often they attend irregularly when they are not wanted at home or in the fields. In such circumstances there is little advantage in scientific teaching, and it seems that teachers, after acquiring their certificates, tend to lapse into traditional methods of instruction; not without excuse, as their chief function is to keep the children out of mischief. In lay schools with certificated teachers, the great majority of the pupils get little if at all farther than in native religious schools such as the monastic schools of Burma, the Koran schools in Moslem lands or the bush schools under missionary auspices in Africa, while they do not enjoy the same moral background, and it may well be questioned whether, from a cultural standpoint, the lay schools are the more efficient. Thus, although the easiest way of spending money on vocational instruction is to multiply training schools for teachers, and such expenditure is less obviously wasteful than on other special types of school, it is not so easy to be certain whether the money is wisely spent, with a proportional return in social welfare or economic progress.

A further instance of the relation between economic demand and vocational education may be found in the contrast between the numbers studying medicine and law. In the dispatch of 1854 one matter thought to demand attention was the provision of special facilities for training lawyers in India. Now, not only in India but in all parts of the tropics where lawyers can find employment, they are even too numerous. Governments no longer need provide facilities for those who want to practise law, but, as with teachers, can insist on adequate qualifications. Yet it is still necessary to encourage the study of medicine. The tropics need more doctors, and generally could do with fewer lawyers. Yet there are many lawyers and few doctors. That is a characteristic feature of plural economy. Every one, European, oriental immigrant or native, who has a case, whether criminal or civil in a western court wants a lawyer trained on western lines. They all want the same kind of lawyer. Demand creates supply and the supply multiplies in excess of the demand, with the result that the lawyers employ touts to seek for clients by fostering disputes, litigation increases, and legal practice

7: Furnivall G-4, 5 (no date) 1948 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

forsakes the honourable traditions that mitigate litigation in the West. On the other hand, each group in each community believes in its own system of medicine, and wants its own medical practitioners. There is no demand for western doctors except among Europeans or in Government service, so that natives trained in western medicine can find only a few openings with little prospect of high fees or good appointments. Naturally they prefer the Bar. Even with such unattractive prospects the supply of doctors is sometimes in excess of the demand and, as in the law, professional standards tend to deteriorate or, as in the Philippines, a considerable number of doctors and dentists are compelled to seek appointments as clerks.[1] Ordinarily, however, the training of medical students rests with the Government, which can adjust the supply to the probable demand. The tropics need doctors, but there is a demand for lawyers, and consequently there are many lawyers and few doctors.

Here then we have the key to the slow growth of vocational and technical instruction in the tropics; it is hampered by the economic environment. But that is not a complete explanation. Other factors have contributed, and among them the tendency to regard economic progress as identical with native welfare. Educational policy looks to technical instruction as an instrument of native welfare, but educational practice encourages it as an instrument of progress. In many dependencies there have been repeated enquiries into the promotion of technical instruction, but these have been conducted largely from the standpoint of employers. The committee of 1926 in Malaya, for example, said, 'We fear that it is only too true that many of the youth of this country have a genuine distaste for hard and continuous manual labour'.[2] Clearly they regarded the youth of the country as merely so much labour, and this note, less crudely expressed perhaps, dominates most of such reports in most dependencies. Yet the report just cited has exceptional significance. The committee reported that there was little scope for technical instruction. But, just at that time, men were crowding into the motor industry and picking up the requisite technical skill where they could and how they could. That was happening throughout the tropics. One of the most striking developments of recent times is the rapid spread of the petrol engine and the introduction of motor transport in the native world. Men have learned to drive cars and lorries and taxis, and to do running repairs and even more difficult work, without special schools but through some form

[1] Mills, p. 368. [2] *Ib.* p. 353.

7: Furnivall G-4, 5 (no date) 1948 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

• 874 of apprenticeship or through learning from one another. As with legal training, the demand common to all communities of the plural society has created a supply even without expenditure or encouragement by Government. It is noteworthy also that, so far as the student demands qualifications for employment in the western sphere rather than the ability to exercise his calling in the native sphere, there is the same tendency to the deterioration of standards as in other professions, and the boy claiming to be qualified as an 'engineer' may be employable only as a mechanic's mate or a road ganger.[1] The encouragement of technical instruction without regard to the demand for men with technical qualifications implied that it is possible to create industries by training men to practise them. This idea still survives in nationalist circles, though it has been abandoned by educational authorities. For the encouragement of technical instruction it is not sufficient to found training-schools and institutions or to train men for employment in the western sphere; it is necessary to create and organize a demand for it in the native sphere of tropical economy, by extending the native sphere to comprehend the whole content of modern economic life.

Naturally the cult of the certificate has extended to the domain of commerce. Formerly in Malaya there were great complaints at the salary required by anyone who could read and write a European language, even very imperfectly; 'youths who were neither good clerks *in esse* or *in posse*' could command high pay.[2] With the multiplication of schools employers get better value for their money, and employees find their certificates less valuable. When a child enters the education stakes in the infant class, his parents may look to matriculation as a standard that will insure them a competence in their old age but, by the time that he matriculates, nothing less than a university degree will command an adequate salary. The commercial school provides a less costly alternative, and of late years the number of commercial schools has multiplied rapidly. These are mostly private enterprises run solely for profit, with no encouragement from the State. But of the students receiving vocational or technical instruction, the number in commercial schools usually ranks second only to the number in teachers' training institutes. Yet normal and commercial schools do not give the kind of technical instruction that was contemplated at the beginning of the century, when the authorities were seeking an alternative to an 'academic' and 'literary' curriculum.

[1] *African Survey*, p. 1234. [2] 1905, Cmd. 2379, p. 21.

7: Furnivall G-4, 5 (no date) 1948 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

The expectation that technical instruction would provide a substitute for academic instruction has clearly proved fallacious. On the contrary, academic instruction has developed more rapidly than before. For this the insistence on technical instruction is in part responsible. Technical instruction is based on modern science, and requires a higher standard of general education than most pupils in the ordinary western schools attain. In Netherlands India technical instruction dates from 1901, when the growth of western enterprise was creating a demand for locally trained assistants. The technical institutes were open to natives, but were inaccessible because at that time only European schools equipped their pupils to receive technical training. That is still the position in many tropical dependencies. Few pupils study natural science, and only a small proportion reach a stage which equips them to receive technical instruction. Technical instruction does not take the place of general education, but stimulates the further development of general education. But the chief reason for the continued and more rapid growth of ordinary secondary and higher education is the modern expansion of western enterprise and commerce. This has created a greater demand for clerks and for a better knowledge of the appropriate European language. In Burma the growth of private enterprise in teaching English compelled the Government to accede to the teaching of English in vernacular schools. In Java the people insist on learning Dutch, and in Indo-China French. In some parts of Africa 'native life is so closely bound up with a dominant white civilization, that the native is not adequately equipped to meet the conditions with which he has to contend unless he knows a European language'.[1] For nearly half a century colonial education policy everywhere has been directed to giving a technical, utilitarian bent to the system of instruction, but has been unable to prevail against the economic forces creating a demand for (more strictly utilitarian) 'academic' courses. Curzon looked to his new policy to train the people in the business of life, but in practice the new policy, like the old, does no more than train them for a life of business. Under the new constructive policy as under the former policy of *laissez-faire*, education in the plural society of a tropical dependency is an instrument of economic progress, dominated by economic forces, and a powerful factor in converting the social order into a business concern.

[1] *African Survey*, p. 1286.

10: Thompson S-4 (no date)1947 ALl Southeast Asia ALl

CHAPTER I · INTRODUCTION

I

LABOR SUPPLY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

464 467 TWO MAJOR LABOR PROBLEMS, which have confronted Southeast Asia in the past and which remain unsolved, are the inadequacy and irregularity of labor supply and the dearth of organized labor movements having objectives like those of Occidental labor unions.

464 Except in such overpopulated areas as Java, the Tonkin delta, and Northern Annam, labor is generally inadequate in quantity and in quality to meet the requirements of large-scale enterprise. Where numerically adequate, the labor supply is either poorly distributed in relation to areas of employment or fails to respond to opportunities offered. The industrial development of the entire area suffers from lack of full-time services of skilled laborers. Some of the factory employees form the only stable, trained groups of workers. They comprise a small proportion of the population.

[874 461] Few facilities have existed for the training of skilled workers, and the association in Oriental minds of manual labor with the humblest social classes has limited wage-labor largely to those driven by economic necessity. Handicrafts are carried on principally by agriculturists in their [476] leisure time and by other "non-professionals." Farmers form the bulk of the workers. Only during the slack agricultural season or after a disastrous harvest are they willing to perform labor for others.

464 167 Supplementation of the inadequate labor force has been effected in various ways—some spontaneous, others planned. The starvation conditions chronic in south China and in India have caused emigration of workers to the underpopulated but richer regions of Southeast Asia, whence they usually repatriate their savings and eventually their persons to the home country. With the exception of Burma, which by reason of its geographic and administrative relations with India formed a special category, the prosperity which prevailed at times in Southeast Asia was less a factor in stimulating this flow than were conditions in the homeland.

Accelerated by the boom in plantation industries during the early